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following the one in which the *liaison* begins. The inference must then be that at the time of her brother's death Gretchen is on the verge of motherhood, if not already a mother. This is thinkable, though for obvious reasons one would rather not think it. But now the *next* scene, with the tell-tale lines 3790-3, clearly refers to an earlier time and yet at this time Gretchen has on her conscience the death of both mother *and* brother. Else why the late insertion of the line

Auf deiner Schwelle wessen Blut?

What do we gain then, so far as rational chronology is concerned, by pressing any particular supposition concerning the Walpurgis-Night? We get a tweedledum in place of a tweedledee. The fact remains that as the text stands, and if language is not to be twisted out of its obvious import, the sequence of the scenes can not be fitted into a natural order of events.

And now, what of it? What attitude shall a critic of the poem assume with regard to that fact? Mr. Furst seems to think that he is coming to the rescue of Goethe's art in *Faust* by trying to prove it consistent with the laws of time and space. But since the poem as a whole is undeniably a dream-world in which the impossible is taken as a matter of course, why should we care very much whether a particular part of it is humanly possible or not? Let me close this letter with an imaginary conversation *à la Landor*, between Goethe and Eckermann:

"Heute bei Goethe zu Tische. Ich äusserte einige Bedenken in Betreff der Chronologie der Liebestragödie im *Faust*, indem ich ihn darauf aufmerksam machte, dass die Scene, welche Valentins Tod darstellt, offenbar am 29 April eintrete und demnach die hohe Schwangerschaft Gretchens voraussetzen müsse; wogegen die darauf folgende Domszene ganz bestimmt auf einen früheren Zustand deute und trotzdem eine Anspielung auf den Tod des Bruders enthalte. Wie haben Excellenz das eigentlich gemeint? fragte ich. Goethe antwortete, indem er mich mit grossen Augen anblickte: Wie kommt man auf solche wunderliche Gedanken? Mein Faust ist doch kein Beitrag zur Obstetrik. Genug; den Poeten bindet keine Zeit."

CALVIN THOMAS.

Columbia University.

'WALPURGISNACHT.'

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES,

SIRS:—A reading of Professor Thomas's communication in this issue of MOD. LANG. NOTES has not caused me to alter my conclusion with regard to the chronology of the Walpurgisnacht in *Faust*, as expressed in the March number of the NOTES. The single objection brought forward by Professor Thomas is based upon an unwarranted inference, namely, "that at the time of her brother's death Gretchen is on the verge of motherhood, if not already a mother."

It has been suggested by Professor Bright that it may be possible to accept my conclusion (that the Walpurgisnacht to which Mephistopheles conducts Faust occurred in the year following that in which the love story of the drama took place) without supposing for the *übermorgen* of line 3662 any interpretation other than the literal one. He suggests that the *übermorgen* passage is to be understood literally as referring to the Walpurgisnacht of the first year, but that the action of the scene takes place upon the Walpurgisnacht of the second year, when Mephistopheles leads Faust to the Brocken festival, which has been dramatically anticipated by the *übermorgen* passage and the line (2590) in the Hexenküche.

CLYDE B. FURST.

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AMERICAN DIALECTS.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES.

SIRS: At a recent meeting of the American Dialect Society a committee was appointed to supervise the reading of American books, for the purpose of collecting all words and uses of words not yet recorded in dictionaries. This is part of the larger work of the Society in gathering all dialectal material which represents spoken and written usage in America. Such material will be eventually incorporated, it is hoped, in a compendious American Dialect Dictionary, similar to the English Dialect Dictionary now in course of publication.

The reading of American books for this purpose has already begun, but the committee desires to secure more volunteers for this important undertaking. The books to be read

include especially all dialect novels, as well as dialect stories and sketches in magazines or special volumes. Besides, American books of all sorts, particularly books of early date, may furnish valuable material. Any one who wishes to assist in the reading is invited to address the chairman of this committee, stating the book or books he wishes to undertake, or asking for assignment of reading. Such volunteers will receive a circular of directions, describing a simple and uniform plan of collecting and reporting dialect words.

The committee hopes to secure the coöperation of teachers of English or other languages in colleges and schools, of clergymen, and of people of leisure, who are interested in observing peculiarities in language. The assistance of all such, as well as of any others who are willing to undertake the reading, is earnestly solicited.

To most readers of this circular, the importance of such an enterprise need not be urged. The undertaking should appeal to all Americans, as contributing to settle the relations of English in Britain and America, and as showing the growth and development of the language upon American soil. Besides, the Dictionary which will doubtless grow out of the work of the American Dialect Society will be a reliable compendium of American usage, useful not only to this but to coming generations.

The committee consists of Professor Benj. I. Wheeler of Cornell University, Mr. E. H. Babbitt of Columbia, and the chairman whose name appears below.

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BRIEF MENTION.

With its present number, the first of the seventh year, the scope of *Dania* is extended so as to include Danish literature as well as the Danish language and folk lore. To the previous staff of editors, consisting of Profs. Otto Jespersen, and Chr. Nyrop, has been added Cand. Verner Dahlerup, who will have special charge of the literature. The contents of this new number give ample promise that the past

interest and usefulness of *Dania* will be sustained and that it will in part fill the vacancy left by the recent suspension of *Museum*.

A complete review of *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon*, by Dr. Henry Sweet (Macmillan & Co., 1897), may be preceded by a brief mention of a book which deserves to be warmly welcomed everywhere. Here, in the author's own words, is "the most trustworthy Anglo-Saxon dictionary that has yet appeared." This statement cannot be denied; here's the novelty of an Anglo-Saxon dictionary not marred by purile errors.

But there are regrets, of which the chief one is occasioned by the editor's excessive compression of his material. The devices for saving space, good as they be, are painfully obtrusive and almost beget a feeling of resentment. The student of English has been paying ruinous tribute in the coin of patient and impatient waiting, and is now again compelled *gomban gyldan* to the publishers of the Bosworth-Toller dictionary, because the larger work must not, at least not before its completion, be superseded by another, we are now asked to be content to accept from competent hands the merest makeshift. The shortcomings of this dictionary that will cause both disappointment and dissatisfaction are thus due to the mistaken policy of its publishers. Dr. Sweet need not be told, and his publishers should understand, that an Anglo-Saxon dictionary without ample 'citations' and 'references' falls far below the initial demand of the student of Old English.

The editor is apparently wholly to blame for the incompleteness of the 'etymological' part of his work. The helpful bracketed hints are given in the most capricious manner; one may say that a good half of what might have been done in the way of indicating the origin and relationship of the words—one half of what every one expects to find in such a dictionary—has been left undone. In this matter, therefore, Dr. Sweet's book is sadly "not up to date." Moreover, can any one conjecture why in the name of reason and good sense we cannot have in Dr. Sweet's books the classes of the ablaut verbs given in the *order* adopted by the entire world of Germanic and Indogermanic scholars?

The scholar uses a dictionary with pen in hand for marginalia. What a disappointment in store for hundreds who will find the first touch of the pen upon the margins of this book to run into a diffusive smudge!

But for the present let the stress be put upon the welcome fact that Dr. Sweet has given us the result of long and efficient effort to bring within the compass of a convenient record all known Anglo-Saxon words. For this unstinted thanks are due.